

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT L 00166 241415Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----241418 028013 /47

P R 241250Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6479
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0166

EXDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT MP UR
SUBJECT: RAMGOOLAM CONCERNED OVER SOVIET "SUBVERSION"
IN MAURITIUS

REF: PORT LOUIS 0164 AND PORT LOUIS 0165

1. IN CONVERSATIONS FEB. 24 WITH ME AT LUNCHEON HONORING CG, USS LONG BEACH, AND WITH UK HIGH COMMISSIONER BRIND AND ME AFTER WE DISCUSSED DIEGO GARCIA (REFTELS NOTAL), PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM EXPRESSED RENEWED CONCERN OVER SOVIET "SUBVERSION" IN MAURITIUS. HE SAID HE HAD TOLD SOVIET AMBASSADOR SAFRONOV EARLIER IN DAY THAT HE BELIEVED SOVIET UNION WAS SUPPORTING THE MARXIST OPPOSITION PARTY, THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM), AND WAS ENCOURAGING THE LABOR UNREST NOW PLAGUING HIS GOVERNMENT THROUGH SUPPORT OF AGITATION BY MMM-AFFILIATED UNIONS OF THE GENERAL WORKERS FEDERATION.

2. RAM SAID SAFRONOV DENIED THESE CHARGES AND INSISTED USSR DEALT ONLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER, THAT IS , WITH
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RAMGOOLAM'S. RAM SAID HE DIDN'T BELIEVE THIS AND HE WAS CONCERNED THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY WILL BECOME EVEN MORE ACTIVE NOW, FOLLOWING THE MMM'S STRONG SHOWING IN THE DECEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

3. RAM SAID HE HAD ASKED SAFRONOV POINTEDLY HOW LARGE HIS EMBASSY WAS AND SAFRONOV HAD REPLIED, "ONLY

SEVEN." BRIND REMARKED THAT FIVE OF THEM ARE INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS, WHICH IS A GREAT MANY FOR A SMALL COUNTRY LIKE MAURITIUS. RAM SAID HE HAD BEEN THINKING ABOUT "KICKING OUT A COUPLE OF THEM" AS A LESSON, HOPING THAT THAT MIGHT MAKE SOVIETS MORE CAUTIOUS. BRIND NOTED THAT OTHER COUNTRIES HAD DONE SO, FOR EXAMPLE UK, WHICH HAD EXPELLED MORE THAN A HUNDRED IN A SINGLE EPISODE. RAM SAID, "YES, BUT WE'RE A SMALL COUNTRY THAT HAS NO MEANS OF DEFENSE. WHAT IF THEY SENT SOME SHIPS HERE TO INTERVENE AND SUPPORT THE MMM? THEY COULD TAKE POWER IN TWENTY MINUTES AND WHO WOULD DEFEND US?" I REMARKED THAT SUCH AN INTERVENTION WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE WHOLE WORLD.

4. COMMENT: AS ADDRESSEES AWARE, THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME RAM HAS VOICED CONCERN OVER SOVIET "SUBVERSION." HE MAY BE RIGHT. HOWEVER, HE APPEARS TO WEIGH ALLEGED SOVIET SUPPORT FOR HIS MILITANT MARXIST OPPOSITION AS BEING MUCH MORE IMPORTANT IN BUILDING ITS STRENGTH THAN PURELY DOMESTIC CAUSES OF UNREST AND DISCONTENT WITH PAST AND PRESENT PERFORMANCE OF HIS LABOR PARTY AND GOVERNMENT. OR IT MAY BE THAT HE FINDS LATTER PROBLEMS INTRACTABLE AND PREFERS TO TRY TO PUT A DENT IN THE MMM BY NEUTRALIZING WHATEVER HELP THEY DO RECEIVE FROM THE SOVIETS. HE MAY GO SO FAR AS TO EXPEL SOME SOVIET INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS OR HE MAY BE CONTENT TO TRY TO IMPROVE SOVIET BEHAVIOR BY THREATENING EXPULSIONS.

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